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Material in Files
Adds to Mystery
Of Jet Downing

Locked in government files is some startling information that deepens the mystery of ill-fated Flight 007, the South Korean passenger plane that was blasted out of the skies by the Soviets.

My associates Dale Van Atta and Michael Binstein have had access to secret and top-secret CIA, State Department and Defense Intelligence Agency material that provides important information on the incident. The highlights:

- The Soviets routinely try to lure U.S. military and intelligence aircraft into Soviet airspace so they can "legally" shoot them down. This is done by a jamming technique, called "meaconning," which confuses pilots trying to follow radio signals from the ground.

The Soviets frequently scramble the navigational signals along their borders, and several planes have been shot at after having been "meaconned" into Soviet skies. The technique is so widely used that pilots who fly near Soviet borders are issued navigational maps with special warnings. They are told that they can't trust radio signals along

the borders and "would be fired on" if they strayed over Soviet territory.

- Though President Reagan insisted from the beginning that the Soviets knew they were firing at a civilian airliner, the State Department doubted this at first. A highly confidential memo of Sept. 2 says that the State Department's special task force was "convinced the Soviets were sure they were firing on an American military plane."

- The State Department, in a secret cable to Seoul the day after the tragedy, said it didn't believe the presence of fervently anti-communist Rep. Larry McDonald (D-Ga.) on the doomed flight had inspired the downing. The CIA reported that the Soviets easily could have intercepted telex communications indicating that other tempting targets might have been on the KAL flight, including Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.).

But the State Department cable to Seoul said: "We have no repeat no evidence that the presence of Rep. McDonald aboard KAL 007 (or the planned travel of Sen. Helms and others aboard that flight) was a factor in the Soviet attack on the aircraft."

- The Soviets may have had an agent among the crew of the KAL airliner that strayed deep into the Soviet Union in 1978. It was fired at and forced down near Murmansk. The Korean copilot, S.D. Cha, explained at the time that the crew

somehow became disoriented while flying. Their instruments indicated that they were in a safe flight path outside Soviet airspace. A top-secret CIA report suggests that a Soviet agent in the crew may have been involved in the disorientation.

- An unreported attempt to shoot down without warning an unarmed Japanese P2V reconnaissance plane on April 2, 1976, in the same area where KAL Flight 007 went down "reflects the traditional Soviet determination to protect their borders and airspace against intrusions, whether real or perceived," a DIA report says.

So it came as no surprise to the U.S. intelligence community when the Soviets sent a missile hurtling at a civilian airliner packed with 269 passengers.

Grizzly Details: The federal government is bearish on grizzlies. Since the late 1970s, the big bears have suffered from the fencing off of National Park Service garbage dumps, an important source of food. This has forced them to forage in national forests, which often contain ranches and homes, and this human contact has led to a number of attacks.

The bear population in the Yellowstone ecosystem has dropped to an all-time low of between 187 and 211. Poachers are a continuing problem, and so is bureaucratic infighting, as five agencies compete for jurisdiction over the bears.

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